

"Taking the examination must be of your own free will. What it mainly consists of is taking your blood pressure with a cuff around your arm. If you want it, we'll be happy to give it to you. You do want to prove you are truthful, don't you?" (Wait for "yes" answer.)

"Then, you are willing to take the polygraph examination, aren't you?"

Beyond this, the officer should leave the explanation of the examination to the polygraphist. The expert is greatly hindered if the suspect is deceived regarding the nature of the test or frightened before taking the examination.

Never assume that a suspect is innocent of the crime simply because he agrees to the examination. Even when a suspect confesses to a crime before the polygraph examination, he still should be examined if possible to determine the extent of his criminality since he may be attempting to hide a more serious offense.

When a sex suspect is known by the victim prior to the crime, the polygraphist may recommend that both the suspect and victim take the test, especially in rape cases where the accused claims consent. If the suspect refuses to be tested, the victim should not be examined.

Note the suspect's reactions when offered the polygraph, and inform the polygraphist when he is briefed on the case facts. When a suspect agrees to be tested, interrogation should cease until the examination is completed. If the suspect asks, he should be advised to continue taking any prescribed medication.

THE EXAMINATION: On the day of the examination, the polygraphist is in the best position to decide whether an examination should be started and, once started, if it should be continued.

Only one crime should be pursued during any one examination. If a person is suspected of more than one offense, a separate polygraph testing session is required for the investigation of each crime.

Because the success of the entire examination is dependent upon proper test question wording, it is imperative that the polygraphist have total responsibility for the issues covered and the exact wording of all test questions.

During the polygraph examination, the officer retains responsibility for the custody of the suspect. The officer will not be in the examination room. Facilities are usually available to observe the suspects during the examination. When possible, the officer should observe and listen to the entire examination.

POLYGRAPH RESULTS: When results indicate that a suspect has been truthful, attention can be focused on others who may be guilty. Polygraph ethics require that the expert inform all suspects their responses were found to be truthful, although disclosure may be delayed until all concerned are examined when there is a dispute, such as in alleged rape cases.

In the case of an opinion indicating lying, investigation of the suspect should be intensified, including the resumption of the interrogation. There is a very good chance that the suspect will confess to the polygraphist.

Where the results are inconclusive, as is sometimes the case in any test where an interpretation is required, the polygraphist will decide if a reexamination is feasible. The investigator should treat the suspect who yields inconclusive results as if the examination had never been given.

Conclusion

When used by a skilled polygraphist, the polygraph is an invaluable investigative aid. Its accuracy is dependent on the skill of the expert as well as the quality of working relationship between the police and polygraphist. Only when the police conduct a thorough field investigation can the polygraphist develop questions which will enable him to contribute to the search for truth.

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